



TRUTH & BELIEF

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I said last Wednesday* that I would tell you something of the truths I hold, not of all the truths I hold, but of those which are at the foundation—my ultimate truths. There is, I feel, one truth of truths, one truth which includes all others—the Unity of All Life. We know science has demonstrated that life is everywhere, though the word “life” is not so easy to define; shall we say “growth,” “unfoldment”? In every kingdom of Nature life is all-pervading. Even that which we call death is only change. We know that not only do our individualities persist after death, but also that the physical body, whence the individuality has departed, is not in itself dead, though it disintegrates. Every particle of nature is life, whether, for purposes of our own, we call it “dead” or “alive.”

But what is more, is that this all-pervading life is essentially one, whatever its form—the same fundamental characteristics everywhere, as science again knows. Here these characteristics sharper, keener, more definite, more sensitive, more complex; there these characteristics duller, simpler, vaguer. But the same vital principles, the same type of reaction to external stimulus. In every kingdom of Nature there is some kind of feeling or sensation, some kind of happiness, some kind of fear, some kind of disease or illness, some kind of death. It sounds too strange to be true, yet science asserts these facts. They can be demonstrated by physical experiments. We do not generally associate these conditions either with the mineral, the vegetable, or the animal kingdom; but that is our ignorance. We must readjust ourselves to the fact of the Unity of all Life, which means the Brotherhood of all Life, and when we say Brotherhood we contact the second great truth, the logical sequence from the first. It is that life grows, evolves. No stopping still. And we begin to talk of a ladder of this growing, of a ladder of evolution, with rung upon rung marking the different stages of growth, or of expansion. Hence each kingdom of Nature represents a stage of growth or unfoldment. Dull characteristics of life in the mineral kingdom. Less dull characteristics, increasing sensitiveness, in the vegetable kingdom. Still greater sensitiveness in the animal, greater definiteness, more power of movement, increased complexity of unfoldment. And then the human kingdom in which you and I are. We probably know more or less what it is that makes us different from animals—mind,

*One of a series of short talks broadcasted from Sydney.

for one thing, conscience for another, bigger purpose for a third, and so on. But the same life, just as there is the same life in the acorn as in the oak. Nourishment may be derived from outside, but it would be of little use unless the acorn could take it in, had the sagacity to assimilate it.

What do we conclude from all this? Surely that the human kingdom is not the final stage of growth. If kingdoms below us, why not kingdoms beyond us? We know nothing of them? No, nor do most animals know aught of the human kingdom. But some animals do, and I claim that some humans know of kingdoms beyond the human. Perhaps Angels belong to one of these. Perhaps the great Teachers and Saviours of the world belong to one of these. "Seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you." Ought we not to try to understand a little more what this brotherhood means—brothers younger than ourselves, our brothers the animals, as Saint Francis so beautifully realised and practised; our brothers the trees, the flowers, the shrubs, the grass, yes, and the weeds, and the prickly pear; our brothers the stones, the humble youngest brother stones and the flower of the mineral kingdom—the diamond, the opal, the ruby, the sapphire, the emerald. Read what Ruskin says about the lives of these beautiful brothers in his "Ethics of the Dust." But all this is about younger brothers. There are our equal brothers, our human brothers, some, perhaps, not quite so old as others, but less distance between them than between us and our animal, vegetable and mineral brothers. No distinctions of race, or creed, or caste, or sex, or colour, make any difference. These are all superficial. Sometimes in our pride, we like to think ourselves superior. Sometimes we think people inferior because they look different from ourselves, eat differently, dress differently, sleep differently, live differently, feel and think and speak differently. That is merely a passing phase of self-preservation. What we are and have we like best; it is largely habit, and no doubt it is, to a certain extent, though not merely as much as we think, best for us. But then we begin to make the fatal mistake of imagining that it is therefore best for everybody else, and that people who have different things have worse things—a different religion, therefore a worse religion; different customs, therefore worse customs, a different nationality, therefore a worse nationality. Very childish, and very untrue, of course; but not unnatural at a certain stage, though by this time the world ought to be quitting some of its childish ways.

Now, if there are our younger brothers and our equal brothers, logic demands that there shall be elder brothers, some a little older but not much, some considerably older, some far older, so much older that we cannot imagine their human origin, it is so far back. The Great Saviours are our Eldest Brethren. The life so perfect and magnificent in Them has been on every rung of the great ladder of life, and now has reached, well, I dare not say the topmost rung—who shall set a limit to God's

omnipotence—but on a rung far removed from our own, so far removed that for us it is the top: we can see and dream no further. And yet, mark you, there are the two great lines that hold the rungs together, stretching from the bottom, as we must call it, to the top, as we must equally call it—one ladder, one path, one origin, one goal. We look beneath us, and see where our footsteps have been placed. We gaze above us, and perceive the places on which our feet have yet to stand. And on each rung we see the clinging life, stretching ever upwards to the rung above.

I do not think I want or need any more truths. This unity, this evolution, this immeasurable and transcendent brotherhood, this certainty, this purpose, this power—what more do I need to make life intelligible and wonderfully worth living? Do I need God? All is God. I have been speaking of God all the time. I am God. You are God. The animal is God. The vegetable is God. The mineral is God. God the ladder. God the rung. God the growth. God the origin and end, if end there be. What do I mean by God? I mean Life. Is there a Person God? I do not know, nor need I care, for there are Those on rungs above me Who are enough Gods to give me all that God could give. Perhaps the sun, the Giver of Life, perhaps He is God; but who shall say He is God the ultimate? And who need care. His sunshine is our growth, come that sunshine whence it may.

Do I need to say that God is Love? When I know the brotherhood I know love. Only as I am ignorant of the brotherhood of life are my eyes blinded to the all-pervading love. Love is everywhere. Life disproves this, you say. I say to you: Know the brotherhood of life and you shall perceive the Love of God. Do I need to say that God is justice? When I know the brotherhood of life I know His justice. Only ignorance blinds me to His justice.

Hard to believe? Hard to understand? Truth needs ardent wooing, my brothers, relentless pursuit, tireless search, unflinching desire. To know Truth you must unflinchingly examine your beliefs, your opinions, your conceptions, your prejudices, your orthodoxies, in the clear light of your most exalted self, your highest self. When you are at your noblest, how do all these things strike you? When you merge your lower self in the greater self under the transmuting magic of wondrous music, of noble utterance, of soul-stirring landscape, of sight or hearing of fine heroism, do you not for a moment, even if only for a moment, feel one with all the world? Do you not feel your brotherhood with all? Do you not feel as if you could do anything for anybody? Do you not see as petty much that in the lower self you thought as right and proper? Do you not feel, just for the moment, as if you could do great things, were dedicated to a noble mission and exalted purposes?

Such, my friends, is the real you, the you that can climb, must and shall climb, rung after rung beyond the one on

which you stand. In such a self not only do you know these truths of which I have been speaking, you have **become** these truths, you are these truths. And you perceive how gloriously worth while it is to climb, if such are the heights which shall be reached, if such the glory into which you enter. The vision fades, perchance, as the magic ceases. But nevertheless can you stay where you are. Evermore must you climb, and you know that the Truth of truths—the Unity of Life—means that we climb together, that we cannot climb alone, and that therefore there is no climbing save as we aid others to climb. We climb as we seek the feet of Those who are stretched on the Cross of Loving Sacrifice. May each one of us become a Cross of Loving Sacrifice, for the Way of the Cross is the hope of the world.

